

An Ocean Acquaintance

By Claude Parnes

Copyright, 1906, by Homer Sprague

The great steamer plowed its way onward, each throb of the engines bringing her nearer to the destined haven. Far up in the bow stood a man and a woman watching through the darkness. Plymouth would be reached early next morning. In silence the two stood gazing at the distant lights now beginning to flash out. This meant the close of the voyage, the end of a week of rare companionship.

At first the man had paid but scant heed to the slender, dark-eyed woman who faced him at the long table. He was off for a rest and did not care to meet people. But something in the quiet, restrained glance attracted him, and later, when he saw her on deck struggling with steamer rugs, it seemed only evil to offer his assistance.

Henceforth they fell into the way of being together. They read and criticized each other's books and magazines, they spent much time pacing the deck, and now had come the last night of it all. She was leaving the ship at Plymouth; he was going on to Cherbourg. The man was the first to speak. "And am I never to see you again?" he asked.

She shook her head. "It is very unlikely." "You mean"—he demanded, "I mean that it is best not," was the quiet answer, but he bent rebelliously closer.

"Listen," he said determinedly. "I know that it is far too soon to speak, that you have known me barely a week, yet when you talk in this way—say that we shall not meet again!"

"You know nothing of me either," broke in the woman hurriedly—"who I am or whence I come."

"I know you are the loveliest and sweetest woman in the world," he said, with a stubborn frown, "and that I"—

"No, no," cried she sharply. Then she lifted her head. "I have not told you the whole truth," she said, a quiet dignity in her bearing. "I am indeed Mrs. Raymond, and my husband is dead, but—I am also Russell Bancroft's sister."

"Bancroft's—sister." He repeated the words incredulously. "Bancroft's sister." His voice betrayed only an amazed bewilderment, but the woman, sensitively alive to every intonation, heard or fancied a certain hidden repugnance beneath the surprise. Her breath fluttered; then she pulled herself together.

"So I am sure you will agree with me that any further friendship between us is impossible," she said clearly. "Good night and goodbye."

Before he could divine her intention she had stepped toward the companionway. The next moment she was gone. The man turned back to the rail.

"Bancroft's sister," he said again, his eyes resting vaguely, unseemingly upon the tumbling waters. "Bancroft's sister."

Below in the narrow little cabin Mrs. Raymond threw herself upon the bunk. The heavy tears hung upon her lashes. He hated her then. She wondered at it in a dull sort of way. Yet who really could wonder that the very name of Bancroft should be distasteful in his ears? She knew the whole wretched story. The two men had been chums at school, roommates at college. She recollected the tall lad whom Russell had brought home for an occasional visit. Then had come Cortwright's engagement. The cards were out, the wedding dress finished. Bancroft was to be best man. And then two days before the day set Bancroft, the trusted, the beloved friend, had fled with his chum's bride, leaving a wild, incoherent note in which they pleaded their unconquerable affection.

Child as she had been, Mrs. Raymond well remembered the tremendous excitement it had stirred, her passionate sympathy for the half-stunned Cortwright. But the affair slid into history, like everything else. After that Russell and his wife lived abroad. She herself had grown up, married and become a widow. Her marriage had not proved exactly a success, yet she had mourned her husband deeply and sincerely, never considering the possibility of her marrying again. Then had come this steamer acquaintance with a man singularly congenial in tastes and ideas. Her learning of his identity had been a shock. She felt that in honesty she must reveal herself. Yet every day she let pass made the task more difficult. And now what she had most feared had come to pass—he chrank from the sister of his faithless friend.

The woman on the bunk started up in sudden fierceness. It was not fair. What part had she in that old deed? She must see him again—explain. She did not know exactly what to say, but the impulse carried her out into the corridor. It was not late. Perhaps he would join her again on deck.

But as she turned into the passageway which led to his door and lifted

her hand to knock a swift realization of what she was about to do swept over her with an intolerable rush of shame. What! Appeal to the pity of any man? For had he truly loved her he would not have let her go.

Dominated by this reasoning, she turned and fairly ran back to her cabin. There, with bowed head, motionless save for soft, catching breaths, she waited until the steward came to call her.

It looked very cheerless in the big room. A few persons were clustered about one end of a long table. She cast a quick glance about, hardly knowing for what she hoped, but he was not there. The steward brought eggs and coffee, and she managed a cup. Then she went on deck.

The rain was dripping dismally. Here and there a light glimmered faintly through the thick mist. So that was Plymouth. The gang plank leading to the tender was steep and slippery. People moved through the dusk like disembodied spirits. It was all very gloomy and very forlorn, and despite herself she shivered.

The gang plank was pulled in. The band, huddled into a damp group on the steamer's deck, broke forth with a lively air. A man standing near by laughed.

"If one has to be awake at such an hour it is a comfort to know that no one else can sleep either," he observed grimly.

"It would be hard to sleep through that racket," assented his companion. At the voice she started violently. Was it—could it be—Cortwright? For a moment she scarcely breathed, thrilled between ecstasy and fear. Then a dark figure detached itself from the fog and came to her.

"It is you," said the voice, and this time unmistakably it was Cortwright's. "I wasn't sure at first."

"But you!" gasped the woman. "Your ship—Cherbourg?"

"Hang Cherbourg," said he cheerfully. Then his voice dropped.

"Do you think that you were very kind to me awhile back?" he asked gravely. "Wasn't it rather mean to spring a surprise of that sort on a man and then run before he could recover?"

"Oh!" expostulated she weakly. This was a new view of the matter.

"I thought it was because you didn't care," he went on. "You know, you wouldn't wait, wouldn't give me a chance to speak. I thought—perhaps—anyway, I felt mighty blue when I went below. Then I found—this." She could just glimpse the tiny square of lawn that he showed her. "It lay on the carpet near my door, and it told me—It told me—Ah, sweetheart," he cried, a sudden subdued exultation ringing through his tone, "that gave me the courage to come. It told me that perhaps you felt sorry for me; that perhaps you too, cared—just a little bit—that you might listen to me. Was I wrong, dear? Will you marry me?"

The mist was drifting out to sea. The clouds had broken, and in the east appeared a glow of crimson and gold. The sun was rising in all its splendor and majesty. The rain was over. For a moment the woman gazed with wide, glad eyes at the newborn day; then she turned to meet the man's eager entreaty.

"I will marry you whenever you like," she said.

The First Lesson of an Arab Boy.

The very first lesson which an Arab baby learns when he begins to talk is to keep facts to himself. It does not sound very friendly put in that way, but it saves a deal of trouble. Foreigners do not understand Arabs. They ask them pointed questions and receive peculiar answers. They construe the answers to please themselves and come away to tell the world that the Arabs are a nation of liars. They are not a nation of liars. Perhaps if they should tell the foreigners to mind their own affairs and let them and theirs alone the foreigners would understand them better.—Exchange.

Ox Bones.

Ox bones have a considerable value. The four feet of an ordinary ox will make a pint of neat's foot oil. The thigh bone is the most valuable, being useful for cutting into toothbrush handles. The fore leg bones are made into collar buttons and parasol handles. The water in which the bones are boiled is reduced to glue, while the dust which comes from sawing the bones is turned into food for cattle and poultry.

A Woman Scorned

[Original.]

"Private Harding," said the general, "your captain tells me that you were born here in the Shenandoah valley and are well fitted to go into the enemy's camp and bring me information I need."

"My home lies just within the Yankee lines, general."

"Very well. By midnight I would

like an estimate of the enemy's force, and be sure to count his guns."

"I will do my best, general." And the young man withdrew.

Jasper Harding, dressed in butternut, that afternoon appeared before a Union picket and, saying that he wanted to go home, was admitted within the Union lines. He would have got on well enough had he trusted to his memory, but, fearing that he might forget, took out a pencil and paper and began to count the cannon, noting the number of the different kinds. In this he was detected by an officer. Harding saw him approaching ominously and, turning, ran. Being a swift runner, he soon found himself beyond the camp, although he was obliged to run to the rear or away from his own lines. He knew well that in a moment mounted men would overtake him, and he must be taken if he could not find some place of hiding.

There are times when a great deal will go through one's mind in a single moment. Harding remembered that Jennie Morgan lived with her mother in a house but a few hundred yards farther up the road. Time was when Jennie would willingly have given her life for his, but since then he had jilted her. True, he had learned since then that Jennie was the girl he wanted, but he had never had an opportunity to tell her so and did not believe she would forgive him if he did. Indeed, he had been given to understand that she hated him with the hate of a woman scorned. But now either Jennie must hide him or he must meet the fate of a spy, which was death.

When he reached the house he looked back to see if he was observed and, being satisfied that he was not, turned in. Jennie, who was in the kitchen ironing, hearing some one enter, went into the hall and met him face to face. A fierce look sprang into her face, which was but slightly softened at seeing the hunted look on his. Settling her lips tight together, she pointed to the door.

There was no time to plead with her, for at the moment Harding saw through the window a couple of cavalrymen shoot out from behind trees at a bend in the road and had only time to step into a closet before they rode up to the house. Jennie met them on the porch and said to them quickly:

"Lookin' fo' a man that came runnin' by hyer a spell ago?"

"Yes. Have you seen him?"

"Reckon, I'd turn him over to you except he done me a mean trick once, and I want him fo' myself. What'll you do to him if I give him up to you?"

"Probably hang him."

"Hangin' is too good fo' him."

"I don't see how we can do anything worse by him unless we torture him, and we're not savages."

"I'm goin' to torture him when I git hold of him."

"Come; tell us where he's hiding."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll turn him over to you if you'll keep him hyer till morning and give me a chance to git my revenge."

At this moment an officer rode up, and after a brief consultation the girl's terms were agreed to. Harding had heard the conversation and, without waiting to be given up, opened the closet door and walked out.

"I don't want any southern girl," he said, "to have the stain on her of betraying one of her own people."

"You didn't think nothin' o' what y' did to me, Jasper Harding. It's my turn now."

The soldiers looked on at this lovers' quarrel with astonishment. "What a devil a woman can be sometimes!" remarked the officer in an undertone.

Jennie gave the soldiers a supper, after which the officer rode back to report what had been done, leaving the prisoner in care of the two men.

About 9 o'clock Jennie stopped shaking her fist at Harding, which she had continued to do at intervals, accompanying her action with vituperation, and started off into the darkness. When she returned one of the men was asleep on the living room lounge, the other was on guard. Jennie unrolled a bottle she had brought back with her and asked the guard if he would like a glass of wine she had brought him. He was not loath to accept, and Jennie poured him out a glass. He had no sooner drunk it than he began to feel drowsy and in ten minutes was asleep.

Jennie, who was watching him, as soon as she saw his head fall on the back of his chair motioned to Harding, upon whom a light had been breaking, and the two left the house together.

"Jennie," he whispered, "I treated you wrong, but I treated myself worse. I found out when it was too late that you were the only girl for me."

"Did you, Jasper? I knew they'd search the house and find you."

"Yes, I did. Lord, how you've been coolin' me! Where did you git the stuff to put him to sleep?"

"From Doc Sanders."

When the two parted they were as happy a pair as the world has ever seen. Jennie was satisfied that, after all, Jasper loved her, and Jasper knew that she had saved his life.

Half an hour after midnight Jasper Harding gave the information he had gained to the general.

AUSTIN A. KINGSLEY.

J. J. HENDRY,

Dealer in

Fresh Meats and Country Produce

Highest Prices Paid for Country Produce, Cow Hides and

Opposite Depot, Arcadia, Florida.

CITAS, M. JOHNSON

ROBT. W. CAMPBELL

JOHNSON & CAMPBELL, Real Estate Dealers

TIMBER LANDS
GRAZING LANDS

ORANGE GROVES, FARM PROPERTY

TWENTY YEARS EXPERIENCE
IN SOUTH FLORIDA LANDS
CORRESPONDENCE SOLICITED

Rooms 5 and 6 DeSoto Block,

ARCADIA, FLORIDA

Webb's Bakery,

Bread,

Cakes, Pies, Fancy Groceries,

Candies,

Arcadia.

Ludden-Campbell-Smith Co

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA.

Florida's Largest Music House. A Complete stock of

HIGH GRADE PIANOS, ORGANS,

and Musical Merchandise always on hand. Save money by buying of a reliable house. Terms most liberal; Prices, the Lowest; Quality, the Best

Branch Store at Arcadia,

T. W. Lawton, M'gr.

Masonic Building, Arcadia, Florida.

LUDDEN-CAMPBELL-SMITH CO

W. F. ESPENLAUB

CITY MEAT MARKET

Is Still Doing Business at the Old Location. If you want Meat Vegetables and Produce go to the City Meat Market. Courteous attention to all orders.

W. F. ESPENLAUB, Phone No. 1 Arcadia

Job Printing

Is our Hobby. Try us. THE CHAMPION, ARCADIA. ARTISTICALLY NEAT PRINTING